

SOVIET POLICY IX WARTIME

Persian-speaking area). Tass dispatches were replete with news about serious work in Iranology conducted by Soviet scholars. Some of these scholars, like Pavlovsky, were brought to Iran for lecture tours. Films depicting Soviet scientific expeditions in Iran were shown. A troupe of artists from Tajikistan toured Iran, presenting ninety shows in sixteen towns. An impressive exhibition of architecture of the Soviet Asiatic republics was organized.

Conscious of the average Iranian's pride in the artistic achievements of his country, Soviet agencies did not neglect this field either. Various exhibitions showing Soviet contributions to the discovery and study of Iranian art were repeatedly presented. Perhaps the most successful of these was a great art exhibit organized in the winter of 1946 under the auspices of the Irano-Soviet Cultural Relations Society. The exhibit was devoted in large part to Iranian art of the modern period and did not fail to produce a deep impression in the capital. Implicitly it served two purposes: to prove the seriousness of the Soviet approach to cultural problems and to show their solicitude for the "free" development of national characteristics. It was an excellent medium with which to refute hostile criticism that under the Soviet system all culture is leveled down to a common proletarian denominator. In this, as in many other cases, Soviet tactics displayed an amazing elasticity. While proclaiming at home that culture should be "proletarian in content and national in form," Soviet propaganda abroad pushed the "national" element to the fore and covered the remainder with discreet silence.

In view of Iranian devotion to Islam, Soviet propaganda took pains to publicize "freedom of religion" in Russia. Tass

carried news about the activities of the Moslem hierarchy in the Soviet Union and its devotion to the regime. On the other hand, attempts were made to counteract the hostile propaganda of the Shia clergy among Iranian masses and to win them over, if not actually to the Soviet cause, at least to the position of neutrality. For this purpose an Iranian mullah, Lankorani, a native of the Caspian provinces, was recruited. Collaborating with the Tudeh party, he was useful in spreading news of the friendly relations between the government and the Moslems in the Soviet Union. In November, 1944, four mullahs from the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic arrived in Teheran on their way to